

## **Latest News on City, State and Federal Issues**

### **City of Spokane's proposed "Tenants Bill of Rights" & "Just Cause" Ordinances**

After four timed delays of both ordinances over the past two years, the City Council delayed indefinitely both ordinances on October 5<sup>th</sup>. By a 5-1 vote the deferral was based on (1) allowing the special committee designed to review both ordinances to complete its work and (2) awaiting news from the Governor and Feds regarding extensions of their eviction moratoriums. I believe there is a good chance that both ordinances will be deferred until after the first of the year, especially now that the Governor has extended his eviction moratorium until December 31, 2020.

### **City of Spokane's Housing Action Plan Working Group Update**

Recent meetings have highlighted the increases costs of new construction, the huge increases in property taxes, property values and the burden on landlords to maintain older housing stock in the greater Spokane area. This awareness is important in working with the various housing and social service agencies who specialize in working with low-income housing needs and concerns. These cost awareness points are critical to developing long-term solutions to our housing crisis.

### **Dealing with Housing Debt and Rental Late Payments**

The Washington State Supreme Court has drafted a pandemic court process with "meet and confer" requirements which would impact seven counties in the State, only Spokane County on the east side of the State. This process requires written notice of back rents due, sharing of resources, outreach to tenants from Dispute Resolution Centers (DRC) and must include representation of tenants by legal aid groups. This process could add another 49 days, (seven weeks) to the eviction process!!

### **Governor's and CDC Eviction Moratoriums**

With the Governor's extension of his moratorium until December 31, 2020 to coincide with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), tenants can still be evicted for criminal activity, health & safety concerns, significant damage to the property, and violating certain contractual obligations other than the timely payment of rent, late fees, penalties or interest.

I am often asked how long with this COVID-19 crisis go on? With an upsurge in COVID-19 cases likely, with the absence of any more significant stimulus funding out of Washington, D.C., I am telling landlords expect the eviction moratorium to be extended into the second quarter of next year, expect repayment of back rents to go for at least 12 months, and expect the financial impact of COVID-19 to last for the next 18 to 24 months before any significant restoration of the economy.

### **State Extends Protections for Energy Customers**

State regulators approved extended protections for electric and gas utility customers who are falling behind in paying their bills. The moratorium on disconnections for nonpayment will be until April 30, 2021 and they now must continue to waive deposits and all late fees through October 27, 2021. This action by the State of Washington suggests just how long the impact of COVID-19 will have on our industry!